



Center for Urban and Regional Affairs

COMMUNITY ASSISTANTSHIP PROGRAM

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Map-it! Mapping Food Access in Southeastern Minnesota

Prepared in partnership with
Latinos en Acción

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Food Mapping with Latino Immigrants in Southeastern Minnesota

This document provides a comprehensive summary of all activities carried as part of project entitled Food Mapping with Latino Immigrants in Southeastern Minnesota. The summary outlines the goals and objectives of the project, the tasks that were carried out in order to develop community engagement efforts, and tools that were considered for the project, our initial research findings based on our outreach efforts, and the outcome of this phase of the project. The Graduate Research Assistant (RA), Leoma Van Dort, completed a 25% appointment for the period between 8/28/17 and 1/10/18. This is equivalent to 195 total hours worked during the fall semester. Her supervisor, Fernando Burga, assigned the RA with projects and monitored progress several times a week, as activities were defined, assigned, and completed. Fernando Burga was responsible for the management of this project.

Background

Food access disparities are influenced by a complex food system in Minnesota that exemplifies a web of factors: food production, distribution, marketing, and consumption. Food access is a health issue but also a community development, urban planning, and equity issue. Ensuring the availability of safe, nutritious, and culturally acceptable food is vital to maintaining healthy communities. Food access in particular is an issue of importance for Latino communities in Southeastern Minnesota given their role as key actors in the labor market that supports agricultural production and meatpacking, as well as the particular needs they may have as newly arrived communities.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of this project is to address the challenge of food access by understanding the needs, experiences, and constraints that Latino populations in Southeastern Minnesota face to reach healthy and culturally relevant food. The project aims to investigate the availability, accessibility, and capacities that Latinos have in reaching food that is nutritious, affordable, and culturally relevant, by conducting fieldwork in Southeastern Minnesota. The goal of this project is threefold:

- (1) To generate questions that provide an understanding of the needs, constraints, and experiences Latino families face in accessing food;
- (2) To develop an innovative data collection method based on participatory mapping techniques; and
- (3) To conduct a pilot study using the food mapping data collection tool.

Tasks and Tools

This phase of the project primarily focused on developing data collection tools and enabling relationship building and trust building with Latinos en Acción (LEA), an organization of Hispanic Families in Dodge Center, MN, dedicated to promoting a better future for the Latino community in Southeastern Minnesota. LEA will provide support for the development stage of upcoming food mapping fieldwork. The tasks that were carried out in this preliminary phase of the project include the following:

1) Food mapping and asset mapping data collection tools

The student developed a preliminary tool for both asset mapping and food mapping that can be used as an effective and innovative participatory data collection technique. To develop this tool, the student conducted archival research and collaborated with another student to learn about community mapping techniques prior to carrying out food mapping fieldwork. We anticipate to prototype this tool with members from the LEA group in Dodge Center, MN, and implement a fully developed tool during community workshops in summer 2018.

2) Research on Ripple Effects Mapping tool

The student met with Evaluation and Research Specialist, Scott Chazdon, to discuss how ripple effects mapping (REM) techniques can be used to evaluate the project outcomes. Based on this discussion and published materials on REM, the student developed PowerPoint slides and an outline for an introductory REM session for the project.

3) Participation in and preparation for LEA workshops

The student travelled to Dodge Center, MN, with project supervisor and project team members to attend several LEA workshops and document ongoing workshop activities. For these workshops, the student developed presentation slides and activities incorporating Design Thinking methods. Prior to each workshop, the student prepared agendas and planned activities for workshops with guidance from the supervisor. The student also developed a work plan for the project in consultation with the supervisor and other project team members.

4) Archival research and literature reviews

The student completed archival research and literature reviews on several topics, including food mapping, asset mapping, food systems plans in the United States, decoding mapping data, Design Thinking methods, and ripple effects mapping. This research will be used to develop research questions, shape the research design, and frame data collection and analysis.

5) Surveys and interviews

The student prepared an online survey for food systems advocates and planners to collect information about their use of the Minnesota Food Charter's Food Access Planning Guide. This survey was shared through the American Planning Association – Minnesota Chapter listserv and the national Food Policy Network listserv. The survey results were analyzed to identify themes. The student also participated in phone interviews conducted by the supervisor with local planners and food systems advocates, and transcribed seven interview recordings for further analysis. The

information gathered from the surveys and interviews will be used to inform how food access is integrated into local planning policies and activities in Southeastern Minnesota as well as equity considerations around food access.

6) Presentations and conference proposals

The student created PowerPoint slides related to asset mapping and work on the project for the Institute for Advanced Study-Public Engagement panel presentation that was held on Friday, November 10, 2017. Additionally, the student prepared proposals for the 2018 National Planning Conference and National Health Outreach Conference. We anticipate that these presentations will help give visibility to the efforts of this project that will address inequities related to food access among Latino populations.

7) Grant writing

The student prepared applications for three grants to help fund the next phase of this project, including the Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, Healthy Food and Healthy Lives, and IDEA Multicultural Research Awards grants.

Project Outcomes

The primary outcomes of this project phase include developing experimental data collection tools and expanding relations with Latinos en Acción (LEA) and Latino residents in Dodge Center, MN, to set the stage for food mapping fieldwork. The specific outcomes include the following:

1) Asset mapping and food mapping tool: a preliminary tool was developed to conduct an asset mapping and food mapping workshop with Latino communities in Dodge Center, MN. This tool will first be prototyped with LEA leadership in Spring 2018.

2) Visibility event: We organized a holiday gathering in Dodge Center, MN, on Sunday, December 3, 2017 to increase the visibility of LEA in the community and build relationships with Latino residents in the neighborhood. This event brought together nearly 100 Latino residents.

Findings from this project will be used to improve community outreach, programming, and data collection methods for Latinos in MN. The findings will also provide recommendations to address the equity goals in food systems planning and inform new policies oriented toward the improvement of food access and health indicators among Latino communities.